

BALLS CREEK SMALL AREA PLAN

PLAN AS RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMITTEE

Note: Maps referenced in this handout are available on the County's web site or at the Planning Department.

SECTION I: LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

Guiding Principles

- P-1 Balance growth with the community's rural character
- P-2 Organize and plan residential development
- P-3 Encourage aesthetically pleasing subdivision design
- P-4 Provide affordable housing for people in all stages of life
- P-5 Reserve open space in new subdivisions
- P-6 Maintain the primarily residential character of Balls Creek
- P-7 Limit commercial growth
- P-8 Focus on quality, community-oriented businesses
- P-9 Require more aesthetically pleasing designs from commercial uses
- P-10 Buffer residential areas from commercial uses
- P-11 Prepare for potential commercial growth at the three commercial nodes along NC Highway 16
- P-12 Focus office-institutional uses in the Highway 16 corridor
- P-13 As with commercial uses, require more aesthetically pleasing designs and buffers from residential areas
- P-14 Limit industrial growth within the study area
- P-15 Preserve open space, pastures and scenic views
- P-16 Support and encourage agricultural uses
- P-17 Protect natural resources

Recommendations

- LU-1 Designate two areas for higher density residential uses, as shown on *Map 5, Balls Creek SAP Future Land Use and Residential Density Recommendations*.
- LU-2 A "Village" area, indicated on *Map 5*, is proposed for multi-family and mixed-use development.
 - .1 Multi-family homes should be permitted in the Villages area, and might include a mixture of apartments, patio homes, cluster developments and zero lot line developments. Multi-family homes should adhere to the following design concepts:
 - a. Limited access/internal access that is landscaped;
 - b. 30 foot landscaped buffer along road frontages;

- c. Limited signage, such as monument style sign that is low to the ground.
 - .2 Internal open space is proposed in the “Village,” either for passive or active use, at a rate of 5% of the property or 10,000 square feet, whichever is greater. A community building, bicycle path, tennis courts, etc. could be included; the 30-foot landscaped road frontage buffer, however, may not be included in this calculation.
- LU-3 The second area of high-density residential development for the Balls Creek community (as shown on *Map 5*). This area should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per $\frac{3}{4}$ acre.
 - .2 Require subdivisions in the high-density areas to preserve or create a 30-foot naturalized or landscaped buffer along road frontage and around the perimeter of the subdivision. Developers are especially encouraged to preserve trees in common areas as well as in these buffered areas.
- LU-4 Designate two areas for medium-density residential uses, as shown on *Map 5*. Residential development in these areas should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per acre.
 - .2 Require subdivisions in the medium-density areas to preserve or create a 30-foot naturalized or landscaped buffer along road frontage and around the perimeter of the subdivision. Developers are especially encouraged to preserve trees in common areas as well as in these buffered areas.
- LU-5 The area proposed for low-density residential is located in the remaining area of the Balls Creek SAP, those portions east of Providence Mill Road/Balls Creek Road, as shown on *Map 5*. Residential development in this area should adhere to the following design concepts:
- .1 Single-family homes should be developed at a maximum density of 1 unit per 2 acres.
- LU-6 Residential subdivisions should incorporate the following additional design criteria:
- .1 Landscaping/buffering – perimeter, entry, 30 foot buffer on road frontage and around perimeter of subdivision; the purpose of this

- buffer is to help preserve the rural character of the Balls Creek community
 - .2 Clustering is an option encouraged for density averaging
 - .3 Subdivision signs
 - .4 Designs should encourage the preservation of existing trees
- LU-7 Provide owners of historic properties with information regarding resources to preserve historic sites – Murray’s Mill, Balls Creek Campground, David Franklin Propst House, located at Providence Mill and Campbell Roads.
- LU-8 Businesses should adhere to the following appearance and design criteria:
- .1 landscaped areas along road frontage
 - .2 limitation on size of signs
 - .3 driveway cuts – interconnectivity
- LU-9 The Village area, as proposed above (see “Residential Recommendations,” above and *Map 5*), will allow a mixture of residential, commercial, office and institutional uses. It is especially designed to encourage multi-family residential uses with open space and landscaped internal access.
- LU-10 Neighborhood commercial nodes should be designated at the following intersections:
- .1 Bethany Church Road and NC Hwy. 16
 - .2 Balls Creek Road and NC Hwy. 16
 - .3 Buffalo Shoals Road and NC Hwy. 16
 - .4 Bethany Church Road and NC Hwy. 10
 - .5 Balls Creek Road and NC Hwy. 10
- See Map 5, Balls Creek SAP Future Land Use and Residential Density Recommendations.*
- LU-11 Neighborhood commercial nodes should include highway business type uses with a site area of 10 to 25 acres and maximum gross leasable area of 50,000 square feet per lot.
- LU-12 Rural commercial nodes should be designated at the following intersections:
- .1 East Maiden Road and Buffalo Shoals Road
 - .2 East Bandys Cross Road and Buffalo Shoals Road

See Map 5, Balls Creek SAP Future Land Use and Residential Density Recommendations.

- LU-13 Rural commercial nodes should serve residents of the immediate neighborhood with a maximum site area of 10 acres and a maximum gross leasable area of 15,000 square feet per lot.
- LU-14 Pursue a high quality business park along the Highway 16 corridor near Highway 150
- LU-15 Include office and institutional uses in Village area as well as in Neighborhood and Rural Commercial nodes
- LU-16 Industrial uses should be focused in the US 321 Business Corridor between Newton and Maiden and on adjacent properties. No additional future industrial zoning is suggested for the Balls Creek Community.
- LU-17 Assist property owners of rural farms in preserving those uses by providing information on conservation easements and tax credit measures.
- LU-18 Develop a mechanism for preservation of open space resources by creating voluntary agricultural districts and conservation easements or by purchasing development rights and buffers in floodplains.
- LU-19 Require subdivisions in the high-and medium-density areas (1 lot per $\frac{3}{4}$ acre and 1 lot per 1 acre) to preserve or create a 30-foot naturalized or landscaped buffer along road frontage and around the perimeter of the subdivision. Developers are especially encouraged to preserve trees in common areas as well as in these buffered areas.
- LU-20 Open space of 15% of total acreage is required in single-family subdivisions (excluding those in the Village area), which may be located within the development as community-use, open-space along the perimeters of the development as well as a required 30-foot buffer along road frontage. (Existing vegetation is allowed to provide this open-space buffer if deemed adequate.)

SECTION II: TRANSPORTATION

Guiding Principles

- P-1 Alleviate traffic safety problems and congestion on major highways
- P-2 Eliminate hazardous road configurations at area schools and create a smoother traffic flow for both parents dropping off students, student drivers and other through traffic
- P-3 Anticipate and plan for growth that will result from road improvements and widening
- P-4 Minimize speeding

- P-5 Preserve good roads, areas of low traffic and scenic drives
- P-6 Provide safe alternatives for pedestrians
- P-7 Protect children walking to school
- P-8 Provide safe options for bicyclists
- P-9 Increase opportunities to link with existing transit routes
- P-10 Study connections, via the Piedmont Wagon Transit System, with the Western North Carolina Passenger Rail Service.

Recommendations

Request from NCDOT District Office:

- T-1 Establish community gateways at the following intersections:
 - .1 Balls Creek Road and NC Highway 16
 - .2 Buffalo Shoals Road and NC Highway 16
- T-2 Install traffic signals at:
 - .1 Balls Creek Road and NC Highway 10
 - .2 Install safety device and/or turn lane at Balls Creek Elementary School and East Bandys/West Bandys Cross Roads or High School
- T-3 Redesign intersections at:
 - .1 Balls Creek Road and Little Mountain Road
 - .2 Murray's Mill Road/Buffalo Shoals Road and Sherrills Ford Road
 - .3 Buffalo Shoals Road and East Bandys/West Bandys Cross Roads
 - .4 Mount Olive Church Road and Bethany Church Road
- T-4 Install warning lights or devices at:
 - .1 Mount Olive Church Road and Claremont Road
 - .2 Little Mountain Road and Buffalo Shoals Road
 - .3 Mount Ruhama Church Road and North Olivers Cross Road
- T-5 Reduce the speed limit on:
 - .1 East Maiden Road from Buffalo Shoals Road east to the Balls Creek SAP boundary should be 45 m.p.h.
 - .2 Balls Creek Road from current 45 m.p.h. limit south of Winslow Road to the intersection of Hwy. 16 should be 45 m.p.h.
- T-6 Improve the following roads to enhance safety:
 - .1 Straighten curve on North Olivers Cross Road
 - .2 Straighten curve on St. James Church Road at Jack Whitener Road
 - .3 Replace bridge on Love Road

- T-7 Evaluate traffic engineering at all existing schools. Turn lanes should be mandatory when new schools are built. Existing schools should be retrofit for turn lanes as budgets allow.
- T-8 Evaluate the possibility of establishing a “future setback ordinance” to prevent building on land designed to become future right-of-way for highway widening.

Add to Catawba County Thoroughfare Plan:

- T-9 Increase pavement width to the maximum extent feasible on:
- .1 West Bandys Cross Roads
 - .2 Smyre Farm Road
 - .3 Water Plant Road from Maiden to North Olivers Cross Road
 - .4 North Olivers Cross Road
 - .5 East Maiden Road from the new four-lane NC Highway 16 west to the intersection of Lebanon Road
 - .6 Bethany Church Road
 - .7 Little Mtn. Road
- T-10 Explore possible local scenic highway designation for the following roads:
- .1 Murray’s Mill road
 - .2 Buffalo Shoals Road
 - .3 East Maiden Road

County ordinance amendment:

- T-11 Establish that all new driveways on the following roads be at least 12 feet wide for the first 20 feet of length with a minimum 3-foot turn radii:
- .1 Hwy. 16
 - .2 Hwy. 10
 - .3 Buffalo Shoals Road
 - .4 Balls Creek Road
 - .5 Water Plant Road
 - .6 East Maiden Road
 - .7 Olivers Cross Road (North & South)
 - .8 Providence Mill Road
 - .9 Little Mtn. Road
 - .10 St. James Church Road
 - .11 W. Bandys Cross Road
- T-12 Apply for TEA – 21 enhancement funds to create a walking trail from Bandy’s High School to Mill Creek Middle School
- T-13 Increase pavement width to the maximum extent feasible along the following roads for bicycle routes:

- .1 Mount Olive Church Road
- .2 Murrays Mill Road
- .3 Balls Creek Road
- .4 NC Highway 10 from the intersection of Murrays Mill Road east to
Balls Creek Road
- .5 West Bandys Cross Road
- .6 Providence Mill Road
- .7 Smyre Farm Road
- .8 Bethany Church Road
- .9 Little Mountain Road
- .10 East Maiden Road
- .11 Water Plant Road
- .12 Buffalo Shoals Road

- T-14 Begin a marketing campaign to publicize existing services offered by the
Piedmont Wagon Transit System
- T-15 Encourage and promote ridesharing/vanpooling to Charlotte through the
Piedmont Wagon and the Charlotte Area Transit Systems
- T-16 Encourage Piedmont Wagon to schedule trips to coordinate with the Western
North Carolina passenger rail service

See *Map 6: Future Transportation Recommendations*

SECTION III: COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Guiding Principles

- P-1 Balls Creek Elementary School and Tuttle Middle School should
continue their standing as “centers of the community.”
- P-2 Public water service should be expanded into additional areas of the
Balls Creek Community.
- P-3 The spirit of volunteerism in existing civic organizations should be
encouraged as sources of community pride and as providers of
recreation options for the community.
- P-4 The volunteer fire department’s role in protecting citizens and their
property and its status as essential to the fabric of the community
should be maintained.

Recommendations

- CF-1 Balls Creek Elementary School should continue to build on its role as an
essential resource for the community.

- CF-2 The Balls Creek Elementary School should be provided with adequate facilities and resources as population increases and more students attend the school.
- CF-3 The future residential density recommendations made by the Balls Creek Small Area Planning Committee should be used by school planners for future school facility expansion needs.
- CF-4 When the proposed land use and housing recommendations suggested by this Committee are approved, the Committee recommends releasing school capacity from limitations currently in effect.
- CF-5 Explore funding options for construction of school facilities, which may include impact fees.
- CF-6 Develop a formal, contractual relationship between Catawba County, civic groups and the Catawba County School Board to expand the schools' use as the area's "Community Centers," especially regarding additional recreation options for children and adults.
- CF-7 Catawba County should revisit the EMS study to see if recent residential development in the Balls Creek area warrants additional consideration for an EMS base in the area, with a special focus on locating such a facility within proximity of the schools.
- CF-8 Encourage the new cooperative water-providers consortium to provide water to areas set aside for high-density development and other areas based on water quality and quantity needs. A priority list of water extensions would include a line from the Balls Creek Campground south on Buffalo Shoals Road to NC Highway 16 and from Balls Creek Elementary School south on Balls Creek Road to NC Highway 16, then join these lines north along NC 16 to the Abernethy Center. These extensions would provide water to areas recommended for development as "commercial nodes."
- CF-9 Catawba County should consider the Balls Creek area as an ideal location for a third County park, providing the southeast portion of the County with walking trails, picnic areas and open space for community recreation.

SECTION IV: HOUSING

Guiding Principles

- P-1 Encourage aesthetically-pleasing subdivision design
- P-2 Encourage the preservation of open spaces as development increases

- P-3 Direct multi-family housing to appropriate locations
 - P-4 Provide for the location of manufactured housing
 - P-5 Promote low maintenance, alternative housing opportunities for seniors
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- H-1 The Balls Creek Small Area Plan Committee recommends the Planning Board and staff investigate the possibility of developing a County-wide minimum housing standard. It should apply to single-family, multi-family housing and rental housing, with standards limiting the number of individuals inhabiting a single dwelling unit.
 - H-2 Cluster development is encouraged as an option for single-family subdivisions.
 - H-3 Open space of 15% of total acreage is required in single-family subdivisions, which may be located within the development as community-use, open-space along the perimeters of the development as well as a required 30-foot buffer along road frontage. (Existing vegetation is allowed to provide this open-space buffer if deemed adequate.)
 - H-4 Three separate densities for single-family housing are proposed: high-density areas (3/4-acres per housing unit), medium-density areas (one-acre tracts per dwelling), and a low-density area which allows densities of 2 acres or greater per dwelling unit. (See Map 5).
 - H-5 Multi-family housing of various sorts (apartments, condominiums, town houses, zero-lot line development and cluster development) is proposed for the Village area.
 - H-6 Rezone the areas shown on *Map 7, "Balls Creek SAP Proposed Zoning Map Amendments."* About 58% of the land in the Balls Creek SAP is proposed for rezoning to R-1 (which allows stick-built or modular homes). Proposed for rezoning to R-3 (which allows double-wide manufactured homes, modular homes and site-built homes) is another 13% of the land in the Balls Creek SAP area. The basis for this proposed rezoning is to preserve the community's historic character, especially in the Murray's Mill and Balls Creek Campground areas, the rural character of the community with its large farming tracts, scenic views such as along East Maiden Road and more intense mixed and residential uses in the "Village" area of the community. This proposal will also reflect the changing pattern of residential housing in the community as manufactured housing decreased from 68% of new homes in 1997 to 39% in 2001.
 - H-7 The Committee recommends that single-wide and double-wide mobile homes continue to be allowed in the R-2 residential zoning district. The R-3 zoning

district is also recommended to continue, which currently allows stick-built, modular or double-wide manufactured homes.

- H-8 Options for retirement living are suggested in the Village area where a variety of multi-family housing is proposed. Retirement housing would expand existing retirement housing presently located in this area.

SECTION V: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Guiding Principles

- P-1 Facilitate and encourage new, community-focused economic development in the Balls Creek area.
- P-2 In the new NC Highway 16 Corridor, encourage limited commercial and office-institutional development which observes development standards in order to provide additional retail opportunities for Balls Creek residents close to home.
- P-3 Maintain existing industrial sites as adequate for the needs of this rural community.

Recommendations

- ED-1 Business development, including new development along the widened NC Highway 16 Corridor, should observe the following appearance and design criteria:
 - .1 landscaped areas along road frontage,
 - .2 limitation on size of signs,
 - .3 driveway cuts – interconnectivity.
- ED-2 The Village area, as proposed above (see *Map 5*), will allow a mixture of residential, commercial, office and institutional uses. It is especially designed to encourage multi-family residential uses with open space and landscaped internal access
- ED-3 “Neighborhood” commercial nodes are proposed for these intersections:
 - .1 Bethany Church Road and NC Highway 16
 - .2 Balls Creek Road and NC Highway 16
 - .3 Buffalo Shoals Road and NC Highway 16
 - .4 Bethany Church Road and NC Highway 10
 - .5 Balls Creek Road and Highway 10

These neighborhood commercial nodes should include highway-business type uses with a site area of 10 to 25 acres and maximum gross leasable area of 50,000 square feet per lot.

ED-4 “Rural” commercial nodes are suggested at these intersections:

- .1 East Maiden Road and Buffalo Shoals Road
- .2 East Bandys Cross Road and Buffalo Shoals Road

These rural commercial nodes should serve residents of the immediate neighborhood with a maximum site area of 10 acres and a maximum gross leasable area of 15,000 square feet per lot.

ED-5 Pursue a high-quality, attractive office-institutional business park along the NC 16 Corridor near NC Highway 150.

ED-6 Additional industrial sites are not proposed for the Balls Creek Small Area. Existing industrial sites in the US 321-Business Corridor between Newton and Maiden provide adequate industrial sites for the coming decade.

SECTION VI: NATURAL RESOURCES

Guiding Principles

- P-1 The quality of water is a vital concern for the public and should be protected.
- P-2 Minimize the impacts of residential development on Anderson Mountain, especially those caused by development on slopes, drainage and excessive use of septic tanks
- P-3 Protect scenic views and corridors as well as wildlife corridors.
- P-4 Provide adequate recreational opportunities, both active and passive, for all segments of the population.
- P-5 Maintain the rural character for which the Balls Creek community is known.
- P-6 Preserve ample open space for future generations.
- P-7 Assist farmers and property owners desiring to maintain the agricultural or open space use of their property.

Recommendations

NR-1 Establish standards for new development on Anderson Mountain above the 1,100-foot elevation in the area designated as “Mountain Protection District” on *Map 8, Balls Creek SAP Natural and Cultural Resources*. All new major subdivisions will be subject to a planned development process which will address the following:

- .1 Lot clearing limits based on percent slope
- .2 Height restrictions
- .3 Building material and finishes of homes and signage to be compatible with the natural environment
- .4 Environmentally sensitive road and lot configurations

The average density allowable is one unit per two acres. To minimize the impacts to environmentally sensitive areas, the transferring of densities within the development will be strongly encouraged.

- NR-2 Coordinate active recreation in the Balls Creek community with local civic groups and Catawba County Schools.
- NR-3 Preserve the community's open spaces through density controls and zoning and subdivision regulations which establish three density areas, high density (3/4 acres per dwelling unit), medium density (one acre per housing unit), and low density (2 acres per dwelling) (see Map 5);
- NR-4 Open space of 15% of total acreage is required in single-family subdivisions (excluding those in the Village area), which may be located within the development as community-use open space along the perimeters of the development as well as a required 30-foot buffer along road frontage. (Existing vegetation is allowed to provide this open-space buffer if deemed adequate.)
- NR-5 Internal open space is required in the "Village" residential developments, either passive or active, at a rate of 5% of the property or 10,000 square feet, whichever is greater. A community building, bicycle path, tennis courts, etc. could be included; the 30-foot landscaped road frontage buffer, however, may not be included in this calculation.
- NR-6 Encourage residential subdivisions to follow design criteria for preserving trees within subdivisions.
- NR-7 Work through county, state and federal agencies to expand educational efforts to farms about voluntary agricultural districts to preserve their farmland and their livelihood.
- NR-8 Encourage the new cooperative water-providers consortium to provide water to areas set aside for high-density development and other areas based on water quality and quantity needs. A priority list of water extensions would include a line from the Balls Creek Campground south on Buffalo Shoals Road to NC Highway 16 and from Balls Creek Elementary School south on Balls Creek Road to NC Highway 16, then join these lines north along NC 16 to the Abernethy Center. These extensions would provide water to areas recommended for development as "commercial nodes."

- NR-9 Consider requesting NC legislative authority to allow Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), which would encourage development in areas with adequate infrastructure and preserve open space in more rural parts of the County like the Balls Creek community.

SECTION VII: CULTURAL RESOURCES

Guiding Principles

- P-1 Identify, recognize and protect significant cultural and historical sites.
- P-2 Encourage further education of the public concerning the history and cultural attributes of the Balls Creek community.

Recommendations

- CR-1 Cooperate with the Catawba County Historical Association to add cultural sites to County mapping projects, so that proposed developments near those sites will preserve the community's historical and cultural heritage.
- CR-2 Encourage the Historical Association to increase public educational efforts for those sites of County- and state-wide significance in Balls Creek, especially the religious campground sites.
- CR-3 Identify additional historical sites in the Balls Creek community which may qualify for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.